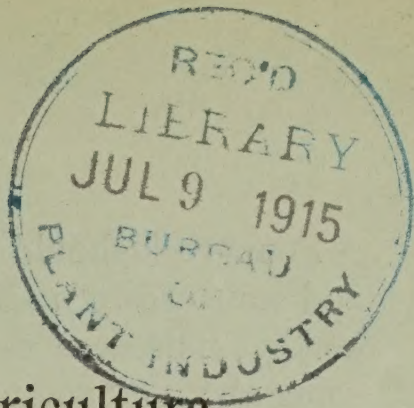


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WASHINGTON, D. C.

FENUGREEK (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*).

DESCRIPTION.

Fenugreek is an annual legume, native in the Mediterranean region and cultivated there and in India. In the Old World fenugreek is cultivated mainly for the seeds, but in India the young plants are used as a pot herb, and in North Africa the crop is sometimes cut for hay. The seeds possess certain mild medicinal virtues and are used in various ways for human food—mixed with flour for bread, as a constituent of curry powders, and boiled or raw. Considerable quantities of the seed are imported into this country and used in medicinal preparations, as fenugreek is one of the principal ingredients of the well-known "condition powders" used for domestic animals. Both the plants and the seeds have a very strong and distinct odor. The plants are erect and loosely branched above except when growing in thick stands, when but few branches are formed. They attain a height of 20 to 30 inches. The leaves are trifoliate, with wedge-shaped or oblong thickish leaflets toothed near the apex. The flowers are yellowish white, solitary or rarely in twos, succeeded by long, slender-pointed spreading pods 3 to 6 inches long, each containing about 15 small brownish yellow seeds. The pods burst open tardily, so that the crop is easily handled for seed production.

ADAPTATIONS.

The area of the United States to which fenugreek is well adapted has not been definitely determined. It has been grown successfully in various parts of California, where the conditions of the immediate coast section seem especially favorable to its growth. A cool growing season or one having no extremes of temperature is favorable to its best development. It will stand at least 10 or 15 degrees of frost, and in sections having mild winter conditions it is best sown in the fall, when it will mature the following spring.

PLANTING.

Fenugreek should be planted in the fall (September) in the southern and southwestern United States, and in early spring in places farther north. The seed can be planted in close drills or sown broadcast, using about 30 pounds per acre. Care should be taken not to plant the seed too deep. No special preparation of the land is necessary. A seed bed such as is desirable for ordinary field crops is all that is required. Fenugreek does best on a good, deep, loamy soil, but the plant succeeds fairly well on gravelly and sandy soils. It is not adapted, however, to soils that become hard, such as heavy clays.

UTILIZATION.

Fenugreek makes a good green-manure crop, for which purpose it is being used in parts of California. Its upright growth, good yield, and densely tubercled roots make it a desirable plant for this purpose wherever it is adapted.

It can also be utilized as a hay or seed crop. However, but little is known as to its value for these purposes in the United States.

HARVESTING.

The fenugreek crop can be handled with ordinary farm machinery. When handling for seed, the crop should be taken from the windrows in the early morning, if possible, as there is less shattering of the seed when the pods are slightly moist. The pods when very dry drop from the stem and break open slightly, although the loss from this cause is not great. From 500 to 1,500 pounds of seed per acre have been secured in California.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

At the present time fenugreek can be recommended as a green-manure crop for California, especially in sections near the coast. Elsewhere in the United States it is doubtful whether it can compete with other crops either for green manuring or for forage. As a garden plant or vegetable it can doubtless be grown to maturity in most parts of the United States, as it requires about the same conditions as garden peas.

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MAY 25, 1915.